

We cannot stop all fires—nor should we, because fire is a natural part of many forested ecosystems. But we can work together to reduce the risks to lives and property. We need to look beyond jurisdictional boundaries and help encourage all techniques—such as defensible space—that will make homes, communities and watersheds more resistant to the more catastrophic and damaging effects from fire when it inevitably does come.

[From the Daily Camera, Nov. 4, 2003]

FIRE PRECAUTIONS SAVE HOMES

FIRE-RESISTANT MATERIALS, THINNED TREES
CREDITED

(By Mary Butler)

All his neighbors told David Mitchell that they thought his house had burned in last week's Overland Fire outside of Jamestown. "But when I drove up to the place the next morning," he said, "about a 2-foot ring around the house wasn't burnt."

The 2,800-square-foot home on County Road 87, where several other homes burned to the ground, was unscathed.

Mitchell credits efforts made to create "defensible space," such as thinning trees, how his home was positioned and his driveway's alignment, for helping to spare the house from the fast-moving fire's path Wednesday.

Even if flames came close enough to lick the home's exterior, he said, fire-resistant materials such as Rastra concrete, Styrofoam blocks and steel roofing used to build the house would have delayed its ignition.

"The fire was so hot, if we had made the building from wood, it would have caught fire anyway," he said.

Since the early 1990s, Boulder County has required new homes and large additions to homes in unincorporated mountain communities to be built with wildfires in mind.

"When you build a new house, you're required to have a fire mitigation plan," said Eric Philips, county wildfire mitigation coordinator.

For instance, cedar shake shingles are banned from use on mountain homes. In some areas, "noncombustible" materials such as stucco, stone and cement siding are required. Tree thinning is also a must.

A site-by-site evaluation is made to determine what mitigation efforts ought to be made, Philips said.

Taking such precautions is thought to have saved at least one neighborhood in Southern California, where wildfires ravaged thousands of homes in recent weeks.

The New York Times on Sunday dedicated a front-page story to the Stevenson Ranch neighborhood. The story described the neighborhood's streets as wide, the homes' roofs as fire retardant, the landscaping as moist and the surrounding hillsides as irrigated and cleared of brush.

Some of the homes' features include double-glazed window panes that resist heat and breakage, stucco-sealed eaves to keep sparks from getting into attics and oversized address numbers for easy identification. Even some of the swimming pools are equipped with valves that allow firefighters to draw the water, the article said.

Whether homeowners' fire-prevention measures made a difference in the Overland Fire, Philips said, has yet to be assessed.

But many Lefthand Canyon-area homeowners, including Mitchell, say they did.

"Thinning trees gives us a fighting chance," said Nolan Farmer, whose Overland Road home was within 40 yards of the 3,500-acre blaze.

He credits tree thinning a team of Boulder County inmates did on his property seven

years ago for saving his property. The work was well worth the \$50 he paid then, Farmer said.

Farmer also built his house with a metal roof, sealed redwood siding and without decks in the event that flames might come up against his home of 12 years.

John and Susan Bernart's Overland Road home, which overlooks the hillside blackened in the blaze, wasn't directly threatened by the fire.

But John Bernart says he had peace of mind knowing that its straw-bale and stucco construction could hold its own against wildfire. Besides being energy efficient, the insulating materials are also extremely fire resistant.

"There are straw-bale houses that are 500 years old in Europe," Bernart said. Still, he said, "We're hopeful we won't have to face this kind of threat again. Our strike of lightning has come and gone."

PAYING TRIBUTE TO BILL PORTER

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 5, 2003

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to rise and pay tribute to a remarkable man from my district. Recently, the Colorado Trappers Association recognized Bill Porter as "Trapper of the Year." Not only is Bill a talented and dedicated trapper, he is also an outstanding steward of wildlife, and I believe that it is important to pay tribute to his contributions here today.

Bill began trapping at the age of eleven in order to supplement his family's income. Over the last 25 years, he has refined his skills to become one of the best trappers in Colorado. Bill approaches trapping with the importance of preserving wildlife in mind. He focuses exclusively on capturing destructive and threatening animals.

Bill is good-natured and has a great sense of humor. He often uses these positive character traits when teaching students and young trappers the importance of legal and ethical trapping. Aside from technical knowledge and ethics, Bill also stresses the importance of working closely with the Division of Wildlife in a combined effort to assure the conservation of animals and their habitats.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to call to the attention of this body of Congress and this nation the accomplishments of Bill Porter. Bill is a man who has spent his life in harmony with nature. His dedication to his trade, and willingness to pass along his knowledge and morals to the next generation, is truly admirable. Congratulations, Bill.

CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN BURMA

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 5, 2003

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to address the current state of affairs in Burma. For years, Burma's military rulers have retained control through the use of rape, murder, torture, and imprisonment. Many of my

colleagues and I co-sponsored the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003, H.R. 2330, in an effort to sanction this regime for its egregious human rights violations and to shed light on the atrocities being committed.

Another action taken to help bring about change in Burma was the assignment of a United Nations envoy to this chaotic region. Unfortunately, many of my colleagues and I now feel that the United Nations process put in place to help bring about change in Burma is seriously flawed. The UN envoy to Burma has done more to diffuse international pressure on the junta than he has to improve human rights conditions there.

Conditions are not improving, they are worsening. Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner and leader of the country's true government, remains under house arrest while the people of Burma are being slaughtered. Just a few days ago, members of Burma's military regime shot at a crowd of demonstrating monks, killing at least one and injuring many more.

In addition, Thailand, Burma's neighbor, has become increasingly friendly with the SPDC, the regime responsible for this bloodshed. Thai authorities deport Burmese migrant workers and other refugees with little concern for their welfare, turning a blind eye to the oppression that awaits them and in violation of international law. The UN has done little to change the relationship between these two nations.

As we approach the next meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, we must be cognizant that the process has failed. We need to strengthen the authority of the UN envoy and replace him with someone capable of rallying international support for change. The present system is not working—let's fix it.

IN RECOGNITION OF ROBERT EUGENE RUARK'S RETIREMENT FROM SOLANO COUNTY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT, SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS BUREAU

HON. ELLEN O. TAUSCHER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 5, 2003

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Robert Ruark, whose retirement from his position as Chief Criminal Investigator of the Solano County Health and Social Services, Special Investigations Bureau will commence on Thursday, November 6, 2003. During his fourteen year career with the county, Chief Ruark has established himself as an extraordinary leader in law enforcement. At his retirement, his many accomplishments and hard work will be recognized within the community of his colleagues and friends.

Robert Eugene Ruark was born in Turlock, California on November 4, 1946. After graduating from Turlock High School in 1964, Robert went on to attend Modesto Community College where he earned an Associate of Arts degree in Criminal Justice. He then attended Chapman University in 1968 where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Sciences. Desiring to put his education to work, Mr. Ruark entered the U.S. Army as a Military Policeman and then served in the Republic of Vietnam as a Military Police Investigator. In 1969, Mr. Ruark graduated from the

U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Course which allowed him to serve as a CID Special Agent until his retirement as a Chief Warrant Officer Four (CW4) in 1989.

In April that same year, he received his appointment as the Criminal Investigator II for the Special Investigations Bureau, Solano Health and Social Services Department and became a member of the California Welfare Fraud Investigators Association. In four short years he was promoted to the position of Supervising Criminal Investigator. His current rank as Chief Criminal Investigator was received in August of 2000.

Robert's dedication to the community is not limited to his work in law enforcement. His desire to serve the community as a positive influence motivated his ordainment to the priesthood of the Orthodox Christian Church in 1996. Upon his retirement from law enforcement, he will continue to serve the community as the pastor of St. Timothy Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church, as he has done since January of 1997. Through his work as pastor he cooperates with a local area food bank to distribute food to many of the areas homeless and those living at or below the poverty level.

However, of all his accomplishments he is probably most proud of his successful 32 year relationship with his wife, Alida, and his two wonderful children: William and Stephanie. Stephanie's daughters, Mikayla and Brianna, have further enriched his personal life.

His fellow employees of the Solano County Health and Social Services, Special Investigation Bureau will forever remember Chief Ruark's extraordinary leadership and contributions to the community.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO JOHN CENTA

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 5, 2003

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to rise and pay tribute to a man from my district with a genuine zest for life. John Centa of Pueblo, Colorado recently turned one hundred years old. Throughout his century of life, John has spread joy to countless people whom he has met along the way. I am proud to call the attention of this body of Congress and this nation to the contributions that John has made to the Pueblo community.

As a child, John helped his father on his family's farm in Kansas. He then moved to Pueblo, where he was employed with Nuckolls Packing Company for twenty years. Next, John went to work with CF&I in Pueblo. Prior to retirement, John and his friend Don English went into business together as the co-owners of Pueblo's Hurricane Car Wash, which they successfully operated for more than two decades.

Each morning, John shares his boundless energy and ceaseless positive attitude in daily interactions with his many friends throughout Pueblo. One of John's favorite places to share his love of life is on the dance floor. A long time member of the Southern Colorado Family Polka Club, John is an immensely popular dance partner. Those who know him well attribute John's health to his great sense of humor, positive attitude, and ability to find joy in the simple things in life.

Mr. Speaker, John Centa has an uncanny ability to draw others into his daily celebration of life. All of those lucky enough to cross his path are better off for having met him. I am honored to pay tribute to him here today. Thanks John, and happy birthday.

RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL STONE, SAND & GRAVEL ASSOCIATION

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 4, 2003

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a proud cosponsor of H. Con. Res. 280, which recognizes the 100th anniversary of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association.

As a member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and the Subcommittee on Highways, Transit, and Pipelines, I believe it is important that we understand and appreciate the efforts of the Association to improve our Nation's quality of life, and the impact that their products make on our nation's infrastructure and economy.

The National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association is the largest mining trade association in the world.

Its members work tirelessly to provide our Nation with a strong and durable infrastructure. The association encourages and helps aggregate producers to meet and improve upon environmental, health, and safety standards.

We should not forget the importance of aggregates in our daily life: approximately 400 tons of aggregate is used on one home; it makes up 80% of concrete and 94% of asphalt.

We should not forget the importance of aggregates to our economy: every \$1 billion in additional investment in highways creates 47,500 additional jobs.

As we build new homes for American families, new roads and bridges to carry us across this great land, and new schools and hospitals to provide our towns with the best services available, we should remember that the National Stone, Sand & Gravel association and its members provide the foundation for our Nation's infrastructure.

For this, I am honored to join with my colleagues to show my appreciation for this great organization.

PROVIDING RELIABLE OFFICERS, TECHNOLOGY, EDUCATION, COMMUNITY PROSECUTORS, AND TRAINING IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS ACT OF 2003

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 5, 2003

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce a public safety bill for the second week in a row. My current bill would reauthorize the successful Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program that has used federal funds to help put more cops on the

streets and to fund community policing. Like a similar Senate bill sponsored by Sen. JOSEPH BIDEN, Jr. (D-DE) and almost 50 other Senators, my bill seeks to head off the shut down of the COPS program, as forecast by the President's 2004 fiscal year budget, which severely cut COPS and critical community policing projects. Last week, I introduced the Crime Victims Assistance Act of 2003 to provide enhanced rights and protections for victims of federal crimes. This bill also has been introduced in the Senate.

As a member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, I have watched police departments here and across the country pressed increasingly into protecting the homeland from potential terrorism. Our police need funding and support from the federal government now more than ever if they also are to continue to focus on the indispensable everyday duties of protecting their communities from street violence and other crime. My bill would provide funding to help police departments put more officers on the beat, purchase high-tech crime fighting tools and technology such as patrol car cameras, pay overtime devoted to community policing and homeland security, and reimburse officers for college or graduate school. Also, my bill would help the U.S. Attorney's office hire more community prosecutors who interact closely with the people they serve. The District of Columbia has been a pioneer in community prosecution, which links prosecutors to specific police districts and neighborhoods.

Recent studies show that COPS grants played a critical role in the crime drop of the nineties. Now with cities like the District experiencing alarming criminal activity, police departments need all the help they can get to find real solutions for handling the heavy double burden of balancing the securing of citizens from terrorism along with protecting them from violence and other crime in their neighborhoods.

Since it was created in the 1994 Crime bill, COPS has awarded more than \$8 billion to police departments to hire or re-deploy almost 120,000 community police officers across the country. In FY 2003, the COPS office awarded \$635 million in grants nationwide, and almost \$7.5 million to the District, \$3 million for Metropolitan Police Department homeland security overtime. In September, I announced a \$750,000 grant for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to hire 10 new Metro officers who will perform community policing and homeland security functions. Many other jurisdictions received similar grants.

My bill will fund the COPS program through 2009. A key change would authorize a new, permanent COPS Overtime Program.

I urge my colleagues to continue to reauthorize the COPS program.

HONORING RICHARD RODRIGUEZ

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 5, 2003

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a long time member of the United Farm Workers, Richard Rodriguez. Richard passed away this past Sunday, November 2, 2003.